

FALL 2008

HEALTHY BODIES | SOUND MINDS | A SAFE PLACE TO WORK

An **FOH Success** Story

MEET 44-year-old Craig Thaler (not his real name). Craig found out he had high cholesterol after taking part in a health screening at an FOH Occupational Health Center (OHC). The FOH nurse met with Craig and explained that high cholesterol was one of several **risk factors** that may increase the possibility of developing heart disease. Some other risk factors are sedentary lifestyle, overweight, and smoking. The nurse recommended that Craig get a medical checkup. She also suggested Craig consider making some lifestyle changes to lower his cholesterol and reduce his other risk factors.

Craig is a nonsmoker, but it had been years since he exercised regularly, he was 40 pounds overweight, and has a family history of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes. Craig still felt healthy, but he knew he needed to make some changes.

After his checkup, Craig made an appointment to receive individualized health counseling at his FOH OHC. Below is his journey toward achieving a healthier lifestyle.

Individualized Health Counseling

The FOH nurse helped Craig track his weight and blood levels. She also helped him make long-term plans for change. In addition, Craig used FOH's online, personalized health promotion tool, **Healthy Focus Motivation**,

Continued on page 4

Holiday Health = Holiday Wealth

Fall is a festive time of social gatherings and good eats. Try adopting some of the tips below and you can enjoy seasonal fun while maintaining healthy habits.

Maintain a Sound Body and Mind

Take time to relax naturally by practicing meditation or just setting aside a few minutes each day for some slow, deep breathing. Go for a change of scenery and take a walk or just sit quietly and clear your mind. A few minutes of peace can go a long way toward helping you gain a sense of inner harmony.

Don't Skip Meals

Never skip meals to "save up" calories before a social event. You'll likely be starving by party time and eat much more than you otherwise would have. Skipping meals can work against you because long periods of fasting alters metabolism. Too many skipped meals and your body may shift into "famine mode" by slowing your metabolism to conserve its fat stores. It's best to eat small meals throughout the day. At the social gathering, eat in moderation and focus on the people rather than the food.

Choose Wisely and Maintain Balance

At the buffet table, use the "plate method" to ensure nutritional balance. Cover half your plate with non-starchy vegetables, one-quarter of the plate with lean meats, and one-quarter of the plate with legumes, whole grains/starch, or fruits.

Stay Active

Try not to forego fitness. If you miss some workouts, opt for alternatives. Use the stairs, park farther away while shopping or at holiday events, or try power-walking while shopping at the mall.

Continued on page 2

Federal Occupational Health (FOH)

The Occupational Health Provider of Choice for the Federal Government

The mission of FOH is to improve the health, safety, and productivity of the federal workforce. Created by Congress in 1946, FOH is a non-appropriated service agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). FOH offers a full range of occupational health services—including Clinical, Wellness/Fitness, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Work/Life, Organizational Development, and Environmental Health and Safety programs—exclusively to federal employees.

Visit FOH on the Web at **www.foh.dhhs.gov**, or call **800-457-9808**.

The Scoop



>>Don't Split That Spud

Americans love the potato. Every year, the average American packs away about 130 pounds of this earthy vegetable. Why not? The potato is a nutritional dynamo that is loaded with potassium and other vitamins and minerals – that is, unless they're sliced, cubed, or shredded.

Scientists at the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) found that if you cube potatoes, like most people do to shorten boiling time; you will also reduce its mineral content by as much as 75 percent. So, next time you're in the mood for some tasty taters, feel free to boil, bake, or broil without guilt but think twice before you split that spud.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture <http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/pr/2008/080624.htm>.

Continued from page 1

Share the Health

Host a holiday party featuring fruits, vegetables, and nutritious treats. Give fitness and health oriented gifts.

Not Just About Food

Enjoy the company of family and friends in ways that do not revolve around food. Volunteer at a charity, make a shopping date, or simply make a date to walk and talk.

This time of year it's easy to give in to the temptation to overeat and under-exercise. Do enjoy seasonal activities with friends and family but keep in mind that a healthy lifestyle is a year 'round commitment.

>>Have a Green Holiday

With energy bills soaring, it is important to optimize wherever possible. As we enter the colder season, ask yourself if you're doing all you can to ensure a sustainable future. Below are some tips.

Adjust printer defaults

Select "draft" and print double-sided when possible. You'll save paper and ink.

Turn off power strips when equipment is not in use

Even in stand-by mode, equipment uses energy. You'll save between 20 and 40 watts for each piece of equipment you have plugged into a power strip and turn off. Even unused phone chargers sap electricity so unplug them.

Tune up the auto

You'll increase fuel efficiency by about 3 percent; replace air filters and see as much as a 10 percent improvement.

Telecommute

Explore your agency's telecommuting options. In this electronic-age it is rarely necessary to be physically present every day. Learn more about federal telecommuting policies at www.telework.gov.

Have a green holiday

Make homemade decorations. Reuse everything and think twice before throwing anything out. Use reusable bags for shopping. Minimize purchase of processed foods and buy locally grown foods whenever possible. Shop online and save on fuel.

Learn about the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Green Power Program at www.epa.gov/greenpower.

Federal Information Links

Food Safety information at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

www.fsis.usda.gov

Healthier US

www.healthierus.gov

MyPyramid.gov (USDA)

www.mypyramid.gov

National Cholesterol Education Program (NHLBI)

www.nhlbi.nih.gov/chd

National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse

<http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

www.hhs.gov

Weight-Control Information Network

<http://win.niddk.nih.gov>

Organ and Tissue Donation Initiative

www.organdonor.gov

National Health Observances

DECEMBER 2008

December 1st

World AIDS Day

www.hhs.gov/aidsawareness-days

JANUARY 2009

National Glaucoma Awareness Month

Prevent Blindness America

<http://www.preventblindness.org/>

FEBRUARY 2009

February 14th

National Donor Day

www.organdonor.gov

STRESS FREE

WITH THE THREE Ps

EVERYONE EXPERIENCES minor stress in daily situations, but feeling stressed out is no fun. There's the pounding heartbeat, nervousness, difficulty concentrating, and "butterflies" in the stomach. While normal everyday pressure in work, family, and personal lives is acceptable, long-term high stress has been associated with increased susceptibility to illness, anxiety, depression, and fatigue.

Most stress is tolerable if you improve your time management; get enough sleep; eat healthy; exercise regularly; and avoid alcohol, caffeine, and tobacco. These are excellent stress reduction suggestions, but they are all "*copied-focused*" methods that manage the symptoms of stress but do little to eliminate the causes of stress.

Researchers have found a new tool for your stress management arsenal. It's called Personal Initiative (PI) training. PI training builds on decades of research on human performance and motivation. It also borrows from what we already know about strategies to build resilience that show people how to "bounce back" from frustrations and setbacks so they can adapt effectively to change.

PI takes you beyond simply managing stress symptoms. You take the initiative, use specific problem-solving techniques, and correct problems so they are no longer a source of stress. PI training teaches that successful stress management involves using both stress management coping strategies and making positive changes and improvements. How does PI work? Remember the three Ps:

PURPOSEFUL

- Take action. Look for what you can change and identify options.
- Take charge and set goals.
- Take action before being asked.

PROACTIVE

- Adopt a long-term view.
- Don't wait until you must respond to a demand.
- Identify future obstacles and act to overcome them.
- Anticipate and prepare for problems and opportunities.

PERSISTENCE

- Move past barriers, failures, and setbacks.
- Don't give in to frustration: Reevaluate, reframe, and revisit goals.
- Create opportunities.

The three Ps of PI – purposeful, proactive, and persistence – reinforce each other. Take purposeful action and identify what you are able to change. Be proactive and make long-term goals – that are within your scope of influence and control (and supported by management). When setbacks occur (and they will), regroup and be persistent about solving stressful problems.

The challenge of today's work environment is that there is rapid change, global communications, faster innovation, and turn-on-a-dime expectations. Such a fast paced environment brings about new and different challenges and stressors daily. Employees will need to be ready to problem-solve, make rapid decisions, multi-task, and coordinate at the lowest organizational level. Developing a PI mindset is all about honing your entrepreneurial spirit and taking an active versus "reactive" approach to frustrating workplace challenges.

If workplace stress is a concern, call your FOH Employee Assistance Program at 800-222-0364. Stress management and other seminars are available at low or no cost.

Your workplace Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to help you and your family manage a variety of issues. See the contact information on the back page.

T

ABLEMATES CAN BE FATTENING



TABLEMATES may actually trump will-power when it comes to healthy eating. According to a study published in the September 2008 issue of *Health Psychology*, people tend to match the eating style of their dining partners, and – hungry or not – eat as much or as little as do their tablemates.

Another interesting outcome of this research has to do with denial. People don't seem to notice they are being influenced. As a result, if people overeat they usually attribute it to something else such as their own failure of will – this can be hard on one's self confidence. The researchers have not yet discovered a reason for this self-blame, but it seems to be a universal phenomenon.

For now, what is important are the implications for anyone who is struggling to make sensible lifestyle changes. Relying on willpower may not be enough. It may be necessary to take a hard look at your environment and make specific changes. Here are some tips.

Be mindful when dining with others. Pay attention to your food selection decisions in the context of the selec-

tions made by tablemates. Do you match your tablemate's enthusiasm for large portions or sweets? Do you tend to "pig out" with certain friends?

Become aware of eating "triggers." If you tend to "clean your plate," use smaller plates and avoid all-you-can-eat scenarios. If you tend to eat more in the company of others, limit social dining – at least for a while.

Choose tablemates wisely. Do you have a friend who is a "bottomless pit" or who overindulges "just this once" at every meal? Reconsider dining with these people. Find non-food related activities to share with these friends.

This new research is encouraging given the relative lack of long-term success of many diets. Next time you blame yourself for your lack of willpower or self-control, take a look around the dinner table. You can't choose your metabolism, but you can pick your tablemates.

If you need help changing an unhealthy habit, call your FOH Employee Assistance Program at 800-222-0364 for consultation, counseling, or training.

Continued from page 1

which allowed him to track and manage his personal health information, and research up-to-date health topics.

Healthy Choices are a Family Affair

Craig worried that he'd hate the taste of "health" foods or that he'd have to give up his favorite dishes. But this was not the case. Craig's wife was an integral part of his success. She modified recipes by reducing the fats and sugar by up to 50 percent without changing the flavor. Also, Craig realized that he liked snacking on fresh fruits and nuts. It made him feel good and gave him more energy.

Changing Habits are Key to Health

Old habits are hard to break – but not impossible. At first, Craig experienced food cravings. The FOH Nurse suggested that he plan ahead by taking healthy snacks to work. Craig discovered that as long as nutritious foods were within reach, he was less tempted to visit the vending machine.

Put Fitness First

Craig was lucky to have an FOH Wellness/Fitness center at his worksite. At the center, he signed up for a fitness assessment and personal training. With the help of the fitness center staff, Craig began working out regularly and even started a walking program.

Success and a New Perspective

Within six months, Craig had achieved his goal. His total cholesterol went from an unhealthy 249 mg/dL* to 175 mg/dL (Normal is less than 200 mg/dL), and he lost 35 pounds. Craig considers the FOH health screening to have been a "wake-up call." He has newfound energy and vitality both at home and at work. Initially, Craig had to work hard to stay motivated. However getting healthy and feeling better became his ultimate reward.

FOH's Occupational Health Clinic and Wellness/Fitness Center services are available to participating agencies. For more information about FOH's services contact FOH at 800-457-9808.

* mg/dL = milligrams per deciliter

FOH

FEDERAL OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The EAP is part of the Coast Guard's Work Life Program. Each Integrated Support Command (ISC) and the Headquarters Support Command (HSC) has a Work Life Office and EAP Coordinator. To contact a Coast Guard EAP Coordinator, call your ISC or HSC Work Life Office. For administrative details about the program, contact Jeffrey Dunlap at 301-443-7589 or e-mail at jdunlap@psc.gov. To visit us on the Web, go to www.FOH4You.com.

Help is available all day, all week, all year.
800-222-0364, TTY: 888-262-7848

This newsletter is brought to you by **Federal Occupational Health (FOH)**, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This newsletter is available electronically at foh.dhhs.gov/eapnews/uscg.

If you would like to have this newsletter sent to you electronically, have not received the right quantity of newsletters, your address has changed or is incorrect, or have other questions regarding the newsletter, contact Haydee Gelpi at 301-443-7664 or e-mail at hgelpi@psc.gov.